

head coach Stan Sims and the whole team on their accomplishments.

The Lady Owls were the only team to have all competitors finish in the top 20. In fact, Patrina Haines finished second in the field, and her teammate Erin Sutton, whose grandfather, Jack Sutton, works in my district office, was named Atlantic Sun Conference's Freshman of the Year and earned a spot on the all-conference team.

Winning a conference championship is quite an achievement, but this victory is even more inspiring when you consider it was the Lady Owls' first year participating in Division I sports. If this season is any indication, we can expect many more winning seasons for the Kennesaw State University team.

Mr. Speaker, these athletes have brought much pride to Kennesaw State University and the entire Kennesaw community. I ask that you join me in celebrating their accomplishment.

CUTS AT NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY LABORATORY WRONG POLICY

(Mr. HOLT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, here is another chapter in the competitiveness saga. A couple weeks ago in the President Bush's State of the Union address he stated, "So tonight, I announce the Advanced Energy Initiative, a 22 percent increase in clean-energy research at the Department of Energy to push for breakthroughs."

This was followed a week later by an announcement from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Colorado of cuts in outside contracts, cuts in operating expenses, and the laying off of 35 staff, including eight researchers, one in photovoltaics and seven in biomass and hydrogen.

The words and the actions simply do not match. The researchers will leave the lab, affecting our economy and distancing us further from solutions in energy technologies. We will lose their knowledge and their creativity.

There is a lot of talk about lost competitiveness, outsourcing of jobs, and lost opportunities in the alternative energy market. We could lead the world in energy technologies if we invest in alternative energies.

Mr. Speaker, which is it: Are we pushing for breakthroughs or are we cutting research?

□ 1015

SBA KATRINA LOAN FUNDING

(Ms. BEAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Speaker, more than 5 months after Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans and the gulf coast, many small business owners are still struggling with no relief in sight. Busi-

nesses are strained from a lack of customers, employees, infrastructure, electricity, and most particularly the access to capital that they need to get back to business. With no other funds available, many small business owners turn to the SBA for assistance. The Small Business Administration is prepared to help entrepreneurs through its disaster loan programs.

Yet today, real criticisms continue to surround the SBA over the agency's failure to provide adequate assistance to the gulf coast's businesses. Since the devastation from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, the SBA has declined approximately 80 percent of all disaster loans, with a backlog of over 200,000 pending applications. On January 30, the SBA released a statement that approximately 51,000 applicants have been approved for financial assistance from the agency; but with over 312,000 total applicants, this is a dismal ratio between those businesses and individuals who are getting loans and those who are left waiting.

As a member of the House Committee on Small Business and because of my own experience as a small business owner, I am well aware of the stimulative effect that small to medium-size firms can have on our regional economies. In the gulf region it couldn't be more critical to ensure small business owners reopen their doors to provide essential services and jobs that allow families to get back on their feet.

We can do better. I ask my colleagues to help me in this effort.

AMERICAN HEART MONTH/WOMEN & HEART ACT

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleagues that February is American Heart Month. Throughout this month, we recognize the millions of Americans struggling with heart disease and recommit ourselves to helping them. And we acknowledge the efforts of organizations like the American Heart Association, which help all of us prevent and treat heart disease.

What is not well enough known is that heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases are the number one killer of women in the United States. Each year, 480,000 women die from heart disease. That is one every minute.

In addition to experiencing classic chest pain, women often have a greater tendency to exhibit atypical symptoms of heart attack, such as difficulty breathing, nausea and unexplained fatigue. So they are often misdiagnosed.

Yesterday, Representative CUBIN and I introduced the Women & HEART Disease Act. This legislation will increase awareness, education, data collection, and the detection of heart disease in women so that we can improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of women with cardiovascular disease.

I urge each of my colleagues to support this bill and other efforts to address the costly scourge of this disease.

ON THE DRUG PLAN DEBACLE AND THE COST OF CORRUPTION

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, leave it to Washington Republicans to create a chaotic and confusing system that has left a large majority of seniors just saying no. The Republican prescription drug plan shows the everyday cost congressional corruption has on the American people.

Republicans promised American seniors they would have access to prescription drugs through private plans beginning January 1, but to date it has been an utter failure. In many instances, beneficiaries who tried to have their prescriptions filled under the new system were either told that their enrollment could not be verified or that their drugs were not covered. As a result, many beneficiaries, particularly those that are called dually eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, were at risk for receiving no coverage at all.

Rather than choosing to work to alleviate drug costs for seniors, Republicans were more interested in coming up with a bill that benefited their friends in the pharmaceutical and insurance industries, friends who have been very loyal to them over the years.

America must do better, we can do better and put special interests aside so that we can help those people who truly need our assistance. Let's start thinking about our senior citizens.

VIOLENCE AMONG GIRLS

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, a Chicago Sun Times article today reveals that fighting among girls in schools is up. As a matter of fact, fights involving girls are up 31 percent, assaults are up 18 percent, and battery is up 15 percent. So far this school year, 529 girls in the Chicago schools have been written up for fighting in incident reports to the district's bureau of safety and security. While girls have been steadily catching up to boys in violence rates in the past 25 years, there are few programs to address this great need.

As we go into budget talks and budget negotiations, let us be mindful of this need and allocate resources to stem this tide of growing violence among girls.

BUSH'S BUDGET AND ITS FAILURES TO MAKE AMERICANS SAFE

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Bush administration refuses to learn anything from 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina. Once again this year, President Bush's budget shortchanges America's security, failing to make it the number one priority. Here are some startling examples of how the President refuses to make Americans as safe as they should be:

First, the budget underfunds key programs that provide local communities with the resources to protect our borders, our ports, mass transit, and critical infrastructure. Second, the budget continues the trend of cutting grants for our first responders, cutting overall funding for three key first responder grant programs by 35 percent below 2 years ago. Third, the budget zeros out funding for interoperability grants, grants that would allow Federal, State, and local governments the ability to communicate during a major disaster or terrorist attack.

President Bush claims he is protecting the homeland, but he refuses to back it up with the funding necessary to prepare agencies at all levels for the worst case scenarios. Hasn't he learned anything from Katrina?

Pull FEMA out from under Homeland Security.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

RECORD votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 79) expressing the sense of Congress that no United States assistance should be provided directly to the Palestinian Authority if any representative political party holding a majority of parliamentary seats within the Palestinian Authority maintains a position calling for the destruction of Israel.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. CON. RES. 79

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that no United States assistance should be provided directly to the Palestinian Authority if any representative political party holding a majority of parliamentary seats within the Palestinian Authority maintains a position calling for the destruction of Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in support of S. Con. Res. 79.

This resolution was sponsored in the other body by our former colleague Senator THUNE of South Dakota and was cosponsored by Senators BROWNBACK, CHAMBLISS, JOHNSON, LIEBERMAN, TALENT and VOINOVICH. It passed the Senate by unanimous consent on February 1, 2006.

On January 25, 2006, Palestinians turned out in large numbers from all walks of life to forge a new government that can respond to their various needs. The Palestinian people voted for change and improvement in their livelihoods. They were largely frustrated by the growing occupation in the West Bank, the inability of the Fatah-backed Palestinian Liberation Organization to deliver on the expectations of the peace process, and internal strife and rampant corruption. The Palestinian citizens used the power of democracy to send a loud and a clear message to their leadership.

Speaking in a press conference shortly after the elections, President Bush noted the power of democracy, saying, "When you give people the vote, you give people the chance to express themselves at the polls, and if you're unhappy with the status quo, they will let you know. Obviously, the people were not happy with the status quo. The people are demanding honest government. The people want services."

The Bush administration's pursuit of freedom and democracy in the Arab world has strengthened the weight and role of "people power" in the region's political development. Representative democracy may result in the coming to power of groups in the Middle East or, for that matter, in Spain, that are critical of the United States or our policies in the Middle East. Certainly the recent Palestinian parliamentary elections pose a unique challenge. Over 50 percent of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council will be filled from a list chosen by an armed group that believes in the destruction of Israel, a United Nations member state, and is recognized as a terrorist organization by the international community.

This result demonstrates the serious contradiction we see in Palestinian territories between the ideal of a democratic government characterized by the rule of law and the reality of a political process in which armed rejectionist groups participate. Should the United States at this point abandon all means

to remain constructively engaged with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas? Tying the hands of the administration is not in the interest of United States national security. We need to react with some care. Hurting the Palestinian people will reward terrorist regimes like Syria and Iran which seek to exploit the suffering of the Palestinians for their own selfish reasons.

S. Con. Res. 79 is direct and to the point. It sends a strong message about the expectations of the United States and the international community toward Hamas when it comes to Hamas' attitude toward Israel. We declare that the United States will not provide direct assistance to a government that believes in the destruction of Israel.

The election of the Change and Reform Party, Hamas' alter ego, has raised questions about other forms of assistance to a future Palestinian government. The Quartet, in which the United States is a core member, concluded that "it was inevitable that future assistance to any new government would be reviewed by donors against that government's commitment to the principles of nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap."

Many might be surprised to know that the United States does not provide ongoing, direct financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The majority of funds are channeled through the United States Agency for International Development to nongovernmental organizations under a strict vetting process. The United States has provided direct assistance only four times, three of which have been under this administration, with the funds being closely regulated and monitored.

United States and other assistance to the Palestinian people is vital to meeting basic needs and avoiding a humanitarian disaster. According to the World Bank, unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza is 23 percent. Forty-three percent of the population is living below the poverty line. United States assistance to nonprofit organizations is also critical to achieving our objective of a two-state solution. Closing the door on moderates in Palestinian civil society will contribute to the growth of warlordism and chaos.

□ 1030

The United States has a vital national security interest in a Middle East in which two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security, based on the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. A viable, contiguous, and prosperous Palestinian state is necessary to achieve the security that Israel longs for.

I believe the administration is responding appropriately to the situation